

It's been fun, seriously, he can say that without exaggerating.

In between the filming and the conventions and the millions of day-to-day things he has to do, taking three days to just hang out is basically a damn vacation. Sure, both him and Jared are constantly under a spotlight. He's pretty sure he can't scratch his ass without a picture of it popping up on Twitter three minutes later with some kind of a comment on the shape or curve of his ass cheeks. But what the hell, they're both used to it by now. He doesn't really mind it any more. He supposes a person can get used to anything.

Well, almost anything.

Jared's been an unstoppable ball of energy the entire time. So much so that by day three, Jensen's vaguely worried. It's not that Jared's putting up a front; Jensen knows him well enough to be able to tell. Every smile, every goofy comment, every full body laugh is completely genuine. But Jensen knows how much it takes out of him, this continuous good cheer, an attempt to communicate with every fan, to pose for every picture, to always be accessible and open to everyone. Jared is just not satisfied until everyone around him is as happy as humanly possible. But by day three, Jared's starting to lag. His smiles are no less genuine, but Jensen can tell that now, there's an almost imperceptible delay to them. To anyone else, it would look like Jared is distracted, preoccupied, maybe focused on something else. And in a way, they're right. Because the more of himself Jared gives out, the more his focus turns inward. Jensen's pretty sure Jared wouldn't find this flattering, but he's always sort of thought of it as Jared's battery charging time. The more of himself he gave out, the more frequently these instances of 'recharging' would happen.

Another thing Jensen had gotten used to a long time ago. By now, he's got a well practiced system of dealing with it too. Become a buffer between Jared and everyone else. Step in and drag him away when he just doesn't know when to quit. Keep him company in silence so Jared can turn inward without feeling pressured to communicate. It's all great, Jensen's got this shit down.

What he's not used to is Jared getting drunk.

It's not like it doesn't happen. Shit, they've both gotten drunk plenty of times before. And Jared is a happy drunk, the sort of drunk everyone wants to be around. He's affectionate and goofier than usual, practically glowing with happiness. A part of Jensen genuinely loves drunk Jared. But a part of him will never get used to it.

Now, day three of ACL and Jared visibly lagging, he's gotten drunk again. He's flushed and giggly, his eyes are shining, he's got his hair in that ridiculous bun, and Jensen feels kind of lost. Jared has no concept of personal space when he's sober; when he's drunk, he seems addicted to body warmth. His shoulder is constantly rubbing Jensen's, his fingers are always somewhere on Jensen's body, his shoulder, his elbow, the small of his back. That damn dimple is constantly

turned on Jensen, and Jensen kind of wishes he was drunk too. His skin's starting to feel too tight and he's extra careful because this happily drunk Jared, this loose and grabby Jared is something he never learned to cope with properly. At least Jared loses that bun half-way through the day. Jensen doesn't get why that damn thing makes his throat tight but he's glad to see it gone.

When Jared fists the back of his shirt to keep his balance, Jensen thinks that's it. Maybe it's time to get Jared off to bed to just sleep it off. He leans forward to tell him this, but the music's too loud and Jared's too distracted. Jensen takes a hold of his shoulder and pulls him over, thinking Jared'll probably let go of his shirt. Jared doesn't. He actually slides his hand up and grips the shirt tighter so Jensen's almost pressed up against him knee to shoulder, and Jensen forgets everything he wanted to say. He's got his face practically pressed to Jared's cheek, Jared's hair brushing his nose. He feels dizzy. Is it possible he's getting a second-hand drunk? No, of course not. He stutters for a moment, then remembers.

"How about we head back to the hotel?" he says in Jared's ear, his lips brushing the skin.

Jared shivers at the contact, his entire body leaning into Jensen's now, letting Jensen hold him up. When he turns his head to meet Jensen's eyes, their faces are so close that Jensen can feel the heat of his breath. His eyes are shining and slightly glazed over. Drunk, Jensen tells himself. Jared's pretty damn drunk.

"Yeah, ok," Jared says, but he doesn't let go of Jensen's shirt, not while they're making their excuses for leaving early, not while they're walking to the car. He only breaks contact when Jensen manhandles him in the passenger seat, and even then, he slumps slightly towards Jensen, as if feeling the loss of body heat.

Neither one of them say anything on the drive and that's another thing Jensen isn't used to. Drunk Jared isn't quiet. If anything, drunk Jared is impossible to talk to because he never shuts up.

Back at the hotel, Jared gets out of the car on his own. He even seems to make an effort to keep a polite distance as they're walking side by side. The effort lasts all of five minutes, until he trips over his own drunk feet and nearly assaults an artificial plant in the lobby. Jensen can't help but laugh. He wraps an arm around Jared's waist and Jared sighs, leaning all of his weight on Jensen again. It's familiar, Jensen propping up drunk Jared. He's done this a million times too. But Jared's still quiet and after a few moments, Jensen feels like he's about to jump out of his skin.

They're in the elevator, in complete silence, and it's so strange, so completely unnatural, that Jensen actually finds himself pressing closer to Jared, faint fear crawling up his spine.

"Dude, are you okay? You're not saying anything. Are you gonna barf on me?"

Jared chuckles, and that's all it takes for Jensen's fear to dissipate.

"Do you ever wonder... if things could've been different?"

Jensen grins and rolls his eyes,

"Here we go. The philosophical side of drunk is out, huh? Wanna know the meaning of life?"

Jared doesn't laugh though, instead, his fingers clench slightly on Jensen's shoulder.

"I'm serious," he says.

He sounds serious. And now that Jensen is listening for it, he doesn't sound that drunk any more.

"What things?" Jensen counters, "If I'd become a physical therapist? If you'd gone to MIT? If Supernatural never happened?"

"If we weren't— if we didn't both—" Jared pauses and Jensen can't help but turn to study his face because he doesn't know what this is about.

It might sound arrogant, but he always knows. Always. He can read Jared like a book. Except for now. Now he feels completely out of depth and he's surprised how much the feeling unsettles him.

There's a tiny wrinkle in between Jared's eyebrows as he's trying to find the right words, and Jensen knows that wrinkle, he knows it better than his own reflection.

"If we weren't who we are," Jared says finally, frustration coloring his voice, "If we weren't two Texas boys who met while being cast as brothers, you know? If we didn't have these— notions about how life is supposed to be."

Jensen's hot and slightly nauseous, and he has no idea why. His heart is beating in his ears, and for some reason, Jared's muscle flexing under his hand suddenly feels ridiculously obscene.

"I don't— I'm sorry man, I just don't get what you're asking," he hears himself say, but it sounds far away, like he's talking through a tunnel.

Jared studies him for a few moments. Jensen can't meet his eyes, but he feels that gaze on the side of his face.

Jared's fingers clench again,

"Never mind, I guess I'm just drunk."

He says nothing else while Jensen steers him to his hotel room, and he seems his normal drunk self as Jensen deposits him on the king sized bed. But Jensen still feels out of sorts, his palms are still sweaty, and he still feels like someone has swiped the ground from under his feet.

Less than an hour later he's at the hotel bar, drinking shots as quickly as the bartender can pour them. It takes two people (Jared isn't one of them, and he keeps thinking this stupidly, like a bizarre drunk prayer) to get him back to his room.

The next day he remembers nothing. Nothing at all.